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ANIMALS THE EXPLORER MAY YET MEET: "UNKNOWN" ANIMALS—WHOSE EXISTENCE

Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans has written a book that is bound to stimulate controversy. It is intended to take the reader "On the Track of Unknown Animals" in various parts of the world. These are the animals of which there is in no museum or collection any bone, or vestige of skin, or any relic that could in any way form the basis of concrete evidence of the animals' existence. To that extent there is full justification for scepticism, or for declaring them to be legendary, mythical or figments of the imagination. Nevertheless, as the author of the book takes pains to show, a surprising number of large animals,

which to-day are so familiar that we regard them as commonplace, have in their time, and that within the last century or so, been equally the subject of scepticism or of active disbelief. Some of the "unknown animals," the existence of which remains to be proven or refuted, are portrayed here. The drawings are reconstructions from the descriptions given by eye-witnesses, or from local beliefs, even threads of folk-lore pieced together. To that extent they are imaginative and it is possible to criticise the action of publishing them on several counts. It can, for example, be said that the method is

Drawings by our Special Artist, Neave Parker, F.R.S.A., based on



REMAINS TO BE PROVED OR REFUTED—PORTRAYED FROM EYE-WITNESS DESCRIPTIONS.

uncertain: that in default of actual specimens for examination a discreet silence is the only wise course. It might also be argued that, by giving form and shape to something known only by the slenderest of clues, a fictitious organism can become an image in the mind of those who see the drawings, and that this can acquire in time a reality which is wholly deceptive. There may be justification for this criticism, yet it is a practice commonly followed by the paleontologist and, more especially, by the anthropologist, of reconstructing by means of drawings the whole animal, or it may even be a human being,

from a few fragments of bone. It could hardly be claimed that this practice is wholly reprehensible, and it can be argued that even if mistakes are sometimes made, reconstructions are legitimate tools for furthering investigation and adding to knowledge. If "reconstructing" the portraits of unknown animals does nothing more, it could, by concentrating attention on the evidence for their supposed existence, bring more information to light than we at present possess. It might even lead to new discoveries. In this light it is fully justified. Dr. Heuvelmans' book is reviewed on page 1102.

Illustrations in the book "On the Track of Unknown Animals."



THE WORLD OF SCIENCE.



SCOFFERS SOMETIMES REMAIN TO PRAY.

By MAURICE BURTON, D.Sc.

WE live in an age when the giant panda is almost as well known as the farmyard hen. We have had toy pandas, photographs of pandas in books and newspapers, and real live pandas in zoos. Apparently the first mention of a giant panda is contained in a manuscript dating from A.D. 621, during the reign of the first of the T'ang emperors. Until March 1869, however, it was regarded as a legendary animal. Then, Père David, a French missionary, was taking tea with a rich landowner in Szechwan when he saw a skin of "the famous black-and-white bear," of which he had several times heard. He set to work to find the animal, and twelve days later Chinese hunters brought him back a young one they had caught alive but had killed, in order to carry it home with less trouble. Père David had further skins brought to him.

From 1870 until 1915 a living giant panda was sought, but in vain. Then Dr. Weigold, of the

The character of the book has been neatly summed up in the Foreword by Gerald Durrell:

In this book Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans has marshalled an astonishing parade of unknown animals, and he has done so with great skill and scientific detachment, resisting the temptation to sensationalise. . . . Up to now most zoologists have treated the whole subject of sea-serpents, abominable snowmen and similar creatures as something that is not quite nice. It is as though they feel there were some gigantic conspiracy afoot to undermine their ideas of what does and what does not exist in the world. This attitude has made it extremely difficult to get at the facts behind reports of these alleged creatures. Whether they exist or not, it was essential for someone to collect all the reports and sift them through for publication. If the animals *do* exist and *are* discovered, this book will prove a valuable piece of research. If, on the other hand, it is proved that they *do not* exist, the book loses none of its value, for it becomes an important contribution to zoological mythology.

The text is divided into twenty-two chapters grouped under seven sections. In Section 1, the author establishes the point that there are Lost Worlds everywhere, with many survivors from the past, and that one-tenth of the earth's land-surface is still unexplored. He also shows how formidable a list can be compiled of large animals discovered during the last century or so. Each of these discoveries has followed more or less the lines of that outlined for the giant panda. Often the first reports have been received with scepticism, even with ridicule, only to be shown in due course that these first reports were perfectly sound. Moreover, the pattern still persists. We have not yet learned the lesson of the Coelacanth, the discovery of which for a brief moment shook the zoologists out of their complacency. But only for a brief moment, and after that . . .

The remaining six sections of Dr. Heuvelmans' book take us to different parts of the world, to South-East Asia with its Abominable Snowman, its ape-man of

Sumatra and the Lost People of Ceylon, to Australasia for the Marsupial Tiger, Surrealist Dinosaur, the Australian Bunyips, the Moa and the Impossible Waitoreke of New Zealand, to South America, Siberia, Africa and Madagascar. In no case does Heuvelmans make extravagant claims. He merely presents the evidence with appropriate and balanced comment.

I read the original French text three years ago, but this did not lessen my enjoyment of the English edition. For me, the most powerful part of the whole book is the first section, in which the author seeks to draw the lesson of the last century or so of zoological discovery. Thus, in 1819, Baron Georges Cuvier, the celebrated French anatomist, said: ". . . there is little hope of discovering new species of large quadrupeds." In the same year, his pupil Diard sent him a drawing from India of an unknown animal, a tapir, with the words: "When I first saw the tapir . . . I was astonished that such a large animal should still be unknown . . . the tapir was as common in the Indian forests as the elephant and the rhinoceros." After this, we had the siamang of Sumatra, discovered in 1821, the gelada, the largest of the baboons (1835), water-chevrotain (1840), pygmy hippopotamus (1843), gorilla (1847),

takin (1850), Schomburgk's deer (1863), Père David's deer (1866), giant panda (1869), snub-nosed monkey (1870). This is by no means the end of the list. In Cuvier's day the known species of mammals and birds numbered 386 and 765, and in 1939, just over a century later, the numbers were 13,000 and 28,000 respectively, and some at least of the former were "large quadrupeds."

It is very clear that there are still a number of large animals in the sea, the presence of which is as yet only suspected. But we are apt to think, as Cuvier did, that the large land animals have been fairly completely catalogued. To think thus is, however, to overlook the large areas in tropical South America, Africa and South and South-East Asia, where human populations are thin and the vegetation correspondingly thick. And this is the point that Heuvelmans tries to make. The history of the last century tells of one large animal



THE ANDEAN WOLF (LEFT) COMPARED WITH THE WOLF OF THE PAMPAS (RIGHT). THE ANDEAN WOLF WAS DESCRIBED FROM A SINGLE SKIN WHICH WAS DISCOVERED BY AN ANIMAL-DEALER IN BUENOS AIRES IN 1926.



A SIDE VIEW, SHOWING THE FULL BODIES OF THE ANDEAN WOLF (LEFT) AND THE WOLF OF THE PAMPAS (RIGHT).

Reproduced by courtesy of Messrs. Hart-Davis, publishers of the book reviewed on this page.

first German expedition to South-West Tibet, saw one. He even kept a young one alive for several days, but "the black-and-white 'bear' was on the point of being considered an extinct species when two sons of President Teddy Roosevelt—Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and his brother Kermit—saw [in 1929] one dozing in the top of a hollow pine-tree. A salvo of shots pitched the poor brute into its last sleep, and its stuffed skin was soon being admired in the Field Museum at Chicago." It was not until 1936 that the first one was caught alive, and not until 1938 that the first live giant panda reached a zoo, the Brookfield Zoo, in Chicago.

These details, and the quotation, are from a book by Dr. Bernard Heuvelmans, "On the Track of Unknown Animals" (Rupert Hart-Davis; 35s.). It was originally published in French in 1955, under the title "*Sur la Piste des Bêtes Ignorées*," in two volumes, and the present book, ably translated by Richard Garnett, is a handsome volume of 558 pages, lavishly illustrated, and containing an adequate bibliography and a good index. It is high time this able work were made available in English, and Rupert Hart-Davis are to be congratulated on having undertaken this.



THE ONLY "UNKNOWN" ANIMAL OF WHICH THERE IS A GOOD PHOTOGRAPH. IT IS OF *AMERANTHROPOIDES LOYSI* AND WAS DISCOVERED BY FRANCOIS DE LOYS, A SWISS GEOLOGIST, AFTER HE HAD SET OUT WITH A HANDFUL OF MEN IN 1917 TO EXPLORE THE MOUNTAINOUS BORDERS OF COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA.

after another being made known to science. Often the discovery was preceded by folk-lore, legend or rumour, rather on the pattern outlined in the story of the discovery of the giant panda. There is still folk-lore, legend and rumour of extraordinary animals, said to have been seen in different parts of the world. These may be wholly wrong, they may refer to abnormal individuals of species already known, possibly to well-known animals seen under unusual conditions, or they may arise from the chance observation of a hitherto unknown species or race surviving in a restricted and inaccessible place.

So many of the alleged animals discussed by Heuvelmans seem by ordinary standards more or less preposterous. So must the Komodo dragon have seemed until its existence was established beyond doubt in 1912. The Congo pygmies had described the okapi to Sir Harry Johnston, who disbelieved them, and, indeed, there is an Egyptian mural drawing of an animal strikingly like it dating from 3000 B.C. And even although we are now familiar with its appearance, the okapi is to an extent preposterous. Too ready disbelief can be as dangerous as too ready belief.